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# Misinformation

## Policy details

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## Policy Rationale

Misinformation is different from other types of speech addressed in our Community Standards because there is no way to articulate a comprehensive list of what is prohibited. With graphic violence or hate speech, for instance, our policies specify the speech we prohibit, and even persons who disagree with those policies can follow them. With misinformation, however, we cannot provide such a line. The world is changing constantly, and what is true one minute may not be true the next minute. People also have

different levels of information about the world around them, and may believe something is true when it is not. A policy that simply prohibits “misinformation” would not provide useful notice to the people who use our services and would be unenforceable, as we don’t have perfect access to information.

Instead, our policies articulate different categories of misinformation and try to provide clear guidance about how we treat that speech when we see it. For each category, our approach reflects our attempt to balance our values of expression, safety, dignity, authenticity, and privacy.

We remove misinformation where it is likely to directly contribute to the risk of imminent physical harm. We also remove content that is likely to directly contribute to interference with the functioning of political processes and certain highly deceptive manipulated media. In determining what constitutes misinformation in these categories, we partner with independent experts who possess knowledge and expertise to assess the truth of the content and whether it is likely to directly contribute to the risk of imminent harm. This includes, for instance, partnering with human rights organizations with a presence on the ground in a country to determine the truth of a rumor about civil conflict, and partnering with health organizations during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

For all other misinformation, we focus on reducing its prevalence or creating an environment that fosters a productive dialogue. We know that people often use misinformation in harmless ways, such as to exaggerate a point (“This team has the worst record in the history of the sport!”) or in humor or satire (“My husband just won Husband of the Year.”) They also may share their experience through stories that contain inaccuracies. In some cases, people share deeply-held personal opinions that others consider false or share information that they believe to be true but others consider incomplete or misleading.

Recognizing how common such speech is, we focus on slowing the spread of hoaxes and viral misinformation, and directing users to authoritative information. As part of that effort, we partner with third-party fact checking organizations to review and rate the accuracy of the most viral content on our

platforms (see here to learn more about how our fact-checking program works). We also provide resources to increase media and digital literacy so people can decide what to read, trust, and share themselves.

Finally, we prohibit content and behavior in other areas that often overlap with the spread of misinformation. For example, our Community Standards prohibit fake accounts, fraud, and coordinated inauthentic behavior.

As online and offline environments change and evolve, we will continue to evolve these policies. Pages, Groups, Profiles, and Instagram accounts that repeatedly share the misinformation listed below may, in addition to having their content removed, receive decreased distribution, limitations on their ability to advertise, or be removed from our platforms. Additional information on what happens when Facebook removes content can be found here.



## Misinformation we remove:

We remove the following types of misinformation:

### I. Physical Harm or Violence

We remove misinformation or unverifiable rumors that expert partners have determined are likely to directly contribute to a risk of imminent violence or physical harm to people. We define misinformation as content with a claim that is determined to be false by an authoritative third party. We define an unverifiable rumor as a claim whose source expert partners confirm is extremely hard or impossible to



trace, for which authoritative sources are absent, where there is not enough specificity for the claim to be debunked, or where the claim is too incredulous or too irrational to be believed.

We know that sometimes misinformation that might appear benign could, in a specific context, contribute to a risk of offline harm, including threats of violence that could contribute to a heightened risk of death, serious injury, or other physical harm. We work with a global network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), not-for-profit organizations, humanitarian organizations, and international organizations that have expertise in these local dynamics.

## II. Harmful Health Misinformation

We consult with leading health organizations to identify health misinformation likely to directly contribute to imminent harm to public health and safety. The harmful health misinformation that we remove includes the following:

- **Misinformation about vaccines.** We remove misinformation primarily about vaccines when public health authorities conclude that the information is false and likely to directly contribute to imminent vaccine refusals. They include:
  - a. Vaccines cause autism (Ex: “Increased vaccinations are why so many kids have autism these days.”)
  - b. Vaccines cause Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (Ex: “Don’t you know vaccines cause SIDS?”)
  - c. Vaccines cause the disease against which they are meant to protect, or cause the person receiving the vaccine to be more likely to get the disease (Ex: “Taking a vaccine actually makes you more likely to get the disease since there’s a strain of the disease inside. Beware!”)
  - d. Vaccines or their ingredients are deadly, toxic, poisonous, harmful, or dangerous (Ex: “Sure, you can take vaccines, if you don’t mind putting poison in your body.”)

- e. Natural immunity is safer than vaccine-acquired immunity (Ex: “It’s safest to just get the disease rather than the vaccine.”)
- f. It is dangerous to get several vaccines in a short period of time, even if that timing is medically recommended (Ex: “Never take more than one vaccine at the same time, that is dangerous - I don’t care what your doctor tells you!”)
- g. Vaccines are not effective at preventing the disease against which they purport to protect. However, for the COVID-19, flu, and malaria vaccines, we do not remove claims that those vaccines are not effective in preventing someone from contracting those viruses. (Ex’s: Remove – “The polio vaccine doesn’t do anything to stop you from getting the disease”; Remove – “Vaccines actually don’t do anything to stop you from getting diseases”; Allow – “The vaccine [for COVID-19, flu, malaria] doesn’t stop you from getting the disease”)

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- h. Requiring measles cannot cause death (requires additional information and/or context) (Ex: “Don’t worry about whether you get measles, it can’t be fatal.”)
- i. Vitamin C is as effective as vaccines in preventing diseases for which vaccines exist.

- **Misinformation about health during public health emergencies.** We remove misinformation during public health emergencies when public health authorities conclude that the information is false and likely to directly contribute to the risk of imminent physical harm, including by contributing to the risk of individuals getting or spreading a harmful disease or refusing an associated vaccine. We identify public health emergencies in partnership with global and local health authorities. This currently includes false claims related to COVID-19 that are verified by expert health authorities, about the existence or severity of the virus, how to cure or prevent it, how the virus is transmitted or who is immune, and false claims which discourage good health practices related to COVID-19 (such as getting tested, social distancing, wearing a face mask, and getting a vaccine for COVID-19). **Click here for a complete set of rules regarding what misinformation we do not allow regarding COVID-19 and vaccines.**



- **Promoting or advocating for harmful miracle cures for health issues.** These include treatments where the recommended application, in a health context, is likely to directly contribute to the risk of serious injury or death, and the treatment has no legitimate health use (ex: bleach, disinfectant, black salve, caustic soda).

### III. Voter or Census Interference

In an effort to promote election and census integrity, we remove misinformation that is likely to directly contribute to a risk of interference with people's ability to participate in those processes. This includes the following:

- Misinformation about the dates, locations, times, and methods for voting, voter registration, or census participation.
- Misinformation about who can vote, qualifications for voting, whether a vote will be counted, and what information or materials must be provided in order to vote.
- Misinformation about whether a candidate is running or not.
- Misinformation about who can participate in the census and what information or materials must be provided in order to participate.
- Misinformation about government involvement in the census, including, where applicable, that an individual's census information will be shared with another (non-census) government agency.
- Content falsely claiming that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is at a voting location.
- Explicit false claims that people will be infected by COVID-19 (or another communicable disease) if they participate in the voting process.

We have additional policies intended to cover calls for violence, the promotion of illegal participation, and calls for coordinated interference in elections, which are represented in other sections of our Community Standards.

## IV. Manipulated Media

Media can be edited in a variety of ways. In many cases, these changes are benign, such as content being cropped or shortened for artistic reasons or music being added. In other cases, the manipulation is not apparent and could mislead, particularly in the case of video content. We remove this content because it can go viral quickly and experts advise that false beliefs regarding manipulated media often cannot be corrected through further discourse.

We remove videos under this policy if specific criteria are met: (1) the video has been edited or synthesized, beyond adjustments for clarity or quality, in ways that are not apparent to an average person, and would likely mislead an average person to believe a subject of the video said words that they did not say; and (2) the video is the product of artificial intelligence or machine learning, including deep learning techniques (e.g., a technical deepfake), that merges, combines, replaces, and/or superimposes content onto a video, creating a video that appears authentic.

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## ^ User experiences

See some examples of what enforcement looks like for people on Facebook, such as: what it looks like to report something you don't think should be on Facebook,

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to be told you've violated our Community Standards and to see a warning screen over certain content.

**Note:** We're always improving, so what you see here may be slightly outdated compared to what we currently use.

## USER EXPERIENCE

### Reporting



## USER EXPERIENCE

### Post-report communication





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## USER EXPERIENCE

### Takedown experience



## USER EXPERIENCE

### Warning screens



## **Enforcement**

We have the same policies around the world, for everyone on Facebook.

## **Review teams**

Our global team of over 15,000 reviewers work every day to keep people on Facebook safe.

## **Stakeholder engagement**

Outside experts, academics, NGOs and policymakers help inform the Facebook Community Standards.

## **^ Get help with misinformation**

Learn what you can do if you see something on Facebook that goes against our Community Standards.

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